243 their mealies with the small pimples of their tattooing (tinhleke ta Ba-Ronga). If maize is the most appreciated cereal, it is certainly not the most ancient known to the tribe. Owing to its modernity, no doubt, it is not subject to any taboo. It is sown and harvested [252] without any rite. At Christmas time, when the first cobs are edible, people joyfully feast on the new crop. They cook some of them in the ashes, but they allow the rest to ripen and dry upon [626] the stalks. Although no taboo prevents any owner of a field from eating the first mealies whenever it suits him, Mboza asserts that people who have obtained green mealies before the other inhabitants of the village, do not precede them in the enjoyment of this much appreciated food : "It would cause jealousy amongst them." This reason is perhaps at the bottom of the luma taboo (I, p. 394). Moreover they fear lest they might have to share their good luck with all their friends !

243 278 Next in importance comes the *mabele*, plur. of bele, dji-ma (Ro.), ñwahuba (Dj.), the *millet* or *Kafir corn*. This is the well-known millet which we give to birds in cages, small, round, blackish grains which grow on a stem 3 to 5 feet high, in elongated cylindrical ears. Kafir corn is pounded, or ground, and may be eaten in the form of flour. But its main use is to provide the 243 yeast for the Kafir beer. As already pointed out (I. p. 42) the 825 mabele is one of the oldest cereals known to the Thongas. It is the ritual cereal, that used for the "shimhimbi," the dish offered to the confined mother or prepared for the luma ceremony. Its seeds undergo a certain treatment before being sown : the sub-chief blows upon them after having taken a small piece of a certain root in his mouth ; this root obtained from a kind of juncus found in the mountains, is supposed to have the power of keeping the ants away from the seeds. He distributes the seeds thus treated amongst his people, and every one mixes some of them with his own supply. Men of the reigning family alone possess 243 this root. Later on, when the time for sowing has come, it is 787 taboo for subjects to precede their chiefs or sub-chiefs in sowing mabele. The bones are consulted. Should the "madjuma" fall showing their mouths (see Part VI), it is the answer of the gods. They say: "Yes ! this is the proper time ! The mabele will do well !"

low, the fish is imprisoned between the reeds and the bank. 226
The construction of this trap is governed by strict laws : no 834
sexual relation is allowed during the five or six weeks of the fishing. The owner of the shibaba must cut the first reed. Women must not approach the spot. On the day of inauguration there is also a luma ceremony similar to that for the nhangu.

But the most curious fishing custom is the *tjeba*. "Ku tjeba" 226
means to kill fish in company in lakes which are drying up. At the end of the winter most of the small lakes scattered all over Thongaland, get smaller on account of the drought, and the fish they contain, consisting mostly of carp and barbel, are obliged to congregate in much smaller spaces. Natives take advantage of this and the whole country-side is summoned to go and tjeba, on a certain day, as it is important to be as numerous as possible in order to ensure success. The chief orders all his men to make *shiranga*, a kind of conical basket, a foot and a half high, whose upper end is open and wide enough to admit the hand. The shiranga must be very strong ; the tree used for the purpose is called ntjangari. When the shiranga are ready, a messenger is 202
sent to all the villages, crying : 226
626

Kho ! Khooco ! Hobe ! Hobeee ! U yala nuteeee ! Na nuti a randja nyamooo ! A randja mihlobeee ! Kho ! Hobe !
You hate your wife ! Your wife also is fond of flesh food ! She is fond of the flesh of the tail of fishes !

Every male member of the tribe must answer to this summons by going to the shore. Should he refuse the call, he is blamed and despised, and his companions will sing to him a mocking song :

U yala ku tjeba, nyathwaka !
You refuse to fish, nyathwaka (1).

In the evening his wife will scold him, on seeing that he brings no fish home! She will punish him by giving him mealie pap without any sauce!

Before the throng enters the lake, someone must *make an* 226
offering ; he must be a descendant of the inhabitants of the country, 782

(1) Nyathwaka is a formula of insult (I. p. 445).

committed! Now, no one ought ever to rob me. What shall I do!" Then the Chief assembles his subjects and invites the guilty one to confess. If all deny it, Ñwagwalen starts off, with all his apparatus, for the place where the theft was committed, and "treats it medicinally" (a dahela mbangu). He spreads out his drugs, raises his stick in the air, and addresses Heaven as follows : 772 821 789 627

> We, Tilo, hi wene u ka ni mahlu, u bonaka busiku ni nhlekanhi!
> Ba tekile psa nga ba kaneta! Tana u ba komba ba psha!
> Oh Heaven, thou it is who hast eyes which see as well by night as by day...
> They have stolen my goods, and they deny it! Come and discover them; may they be consumed!

Then the clouds begin to gather, and, towards evening, the storm breaks. Lightning strikes the thief in his hut, and causes the stolen articles to reappear. — "I saw this happen at Hoñwana," declared Spoon, "but of late years such occurrences have been less frequent."

According to Camilla, the guilty person is sometimes punished by a terrible attack of vermin, of which he is unable to rid himself ; or he is confronted with several palm leaves, which, by a kind of supernatural judgment, turn into snakes, if he be truly guilty of having stolen the missing property.

The intervention of Heaven in the matter of detecting thieves is also an accepted fact in Khosen. My colleague, the Rev. A. Grandjean, told me of the following significant custom. When there is a storm, those who have missed any belongings go and stand at the door of the hut of the suspected thief, and it is quite possible that the inmate, terrified by the thunder, may throw out the stolen articles.

It may be concluded, from these perfectly authenticated customs, that the Natives attribute to Heaven the power of *omniscience*, more especially in respect to the detection of theft. The basket of bones is never consulted for this purpose. Moreover as Heaven guarantees property and makes people afraid to steal, it acts as a kind of *moralising influence*. [626]

I have also been told by witnesses from the Nkuna region that into the composition of the charm used to protect gardens against thieves, (p. 30) there enters a little powder obtained by burning a 789 772

784 vertige intellectuel). Prof. Raoul Allier, in his valuable book on
152 *La Psychologie de la Conversion chez les peuples non civilisés* (Vol. I. p. 250-260), ably describes the psychological process which takes place in the soul of the savage. Suppose some event to have happened which has caused a deep emotion in the tribe, the arrival for instance of the first Europeans with a number of unknown objects which arouse fear in the Native population. This emotion may perhaps subside and eventually be forgotten, and the tribe will accustom itself to the presence of the new comers ; but if some great misfortune supervenes, for instance if a serious epidemic breaks out, a new emotion will be produced throughout the country. This will remind the people of the emotion previously experienced on the arrival of the Europeans, and, in the disturbed state of mind thus created, the association established between the two emotions will be extended to the two facts which gave birth to these emotions, and the tribe will declare that the first fact is the cause of the second. Europeans and everything they brought with them will henceforth be considered as taboo. This is utterly illogical and the conclusion absurd. Yet this is what actually happens amongst people whose reasoning faculties are but little developed. These observations help us greatly in our understanding of primitive mentality, and many taboos may be psychologically explained in this way. Most of them, however, are inexplicable. They originate in the animistic or dynamistic collective representations of the tribe (p. 368) and these representations are instinctive, unconscious and consequently unaccountable.

784 2) How are they *enforced*? In as far as taboos have been
●626 proclaimed by conscious agents, their transgression will meet
753 with punishment by those agents. A chief will sue a subject using a hlonipha word. The gods will punish those who transgress the law of hierarchy, who pass all bounds in incontinence, who forget their duties towards them (p. 426). But, in most cases, the decree is not enforced by a conscious agent. The *taboo avenges itself directly*. Consumption, swelling of the legs, the impossibility of passing water, disease of one kind or another will follow the transgression, or the children will be covered with an eruption of pimples.